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ABSTRACT

To gain a sense of good rhetorical structure, what students of writing in English as a second language need to do is not to practice writing paragraphs and essays conforming to particular patterns, but rather to recognize and understand the resources available for indicating relationships between the propositions that make up their own, unique texts. Two sets of resources identified in the literature--cohesive linguistic elements and sentence structure--can be used or misused in a student's text. This is exemplified in a comparison, by sector and cohesion analysis, of three text versions, two written by a student before and after class discussion, and one teacher revision. It appears from the analysis that the need to work on grammar does not end when students are no longer making sentence-level errors. Just as it is important to think about what their readers already know and what new information they want to give, it is also important for students to recognize the resources in English for distinguishing given from new information, as instruments for communicating with readers. These resources are largely grammatical: reference items, explicit linkers, and perhaps most important, the distribution of information within the sentence. (MSE)

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From Sentence to Paragraph

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It is a common experience for teachers of English composition to come across, in their students' writing, portions of text that are comprehensible enough, but do not seem to "work" properly. Often the problem is attributed to grammar, and the teacher may spend a good deal of time identifying errors at the sentence level and encouraging the student to correct them. But even when all the corrections are made there still seems to be a problem: the text is not good writing although it is hard to determine what exactly is wrong.

The problem can be described as one of **rhetorical structure**, that is of the structure of larger units than the individual sentence. But, as Henry Widdowson (1979) has pointed out, such larger units do not have structure in the same sense as sentences have; for although there are preferred patterns within the language—patterns that are recognized by readers and used in comprehension and recall (Meyer 1975; Kintsch 1977; Connor 1984)—they are not limited or prescriptive in the way that

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sentence patterns are. On the contrary, the better written the text, the more individual its structure seems to be, making it one of a kind. So what students need to do is not to practise writing paragraphs and essays that conform to particular patterns, but rather to recognize and understand the resources available for indicating relationships between the propositions that make up their own, unique, texts.

It is our responsibility, therefore, as teachers, to have a clear understanding ourselves of what those resources are. This question has been addressed most notably by Michael Halliday and Ruqaiya Hasan in their by now well-known work, Cohesion in English (1976). They identify as **cohesive** all those linguistic elements that indicate links across sentence boundaries—reference pronouns (such as he, she, and it), demonstratives (the, this, and that), substitute items (one and do), ellipsis, connectives, and lexical items that have sense relations with ones used earlier in the text. They describe how the use of these resources can be analysed in any particular text to show how the text enables readers to recognize it as a cohesive whole.

Halliday and Hasan do not, however, discuss another resource that English has for indicating rhetorical structure: namely, the flexibility of

structure at the sentence level. For, although the order of constituents in an English sentence is an important determinant of referential meaning ("Man eats dog" is not the same as "Dog eats man"), it is possible, through the use of passive constructions, cleft sentences, or nominalization, to reorder the semantic elements so as to neither alter the referential meaning nor violate the syntax (we can, for example, say "Man is eaten by dog", or "The one who ate the man is the dog", or even "There has been a case of a man-eating dog"). This potential for reordering is used, according to linguists of the Prague Circle (e.g. Havranek 1929), for a distinct purpose: it enables writers or speakers to keep given information at the beginning of their sentences and to introduce new information at the end, where it will be noticed, as the **comment** on the given **topic**, or **rheme** to the given **theme** (Danes 1974). In subsequent sentences such comments, or rhemes, are then **thematized** by being picked up by some reference item or connective and placed in the topic or theme position, near the beginning. Sentence structure is thus, for the reader of an English text, a second and important guide to its rhetorical structure.

The purpose of this paper is to show how these two sets of resources are used, or misused, in a student text. To do so I have taken a paragraph

from a student's essay—a paragraph that exemplifies the kind of problem described above—and have analysed its sentences by a method known as **sector analysis**, which was developed first by Robert Allen (1972) and has more recently been described by Alice Deakins (1985). I have superimposed on this a cohesion analysis, following ideas suggested by Halliday and Hasan (1976). Two later versions of the same text, one written by the student after discussion in class, and the other written by myself, are then analysed in the same way, and all three are compared. The three versions of the text are given below:

Version 1

As far as my daughter was concerned, this was a pleasant experience. She saw her mom in a new light, as a person with a personal goal and a definite plan of attaining it. No longer did mom just talk about this elusive degree, she was reaching for it. Surprisingly enough, she boasted to her friends of the fact that mom was returning to school. Because this is something I sincerely want to accomplish, I am very serious about studying and doing assignments. I feel this has given her a new outlook on the reason and importance of her education. At fifteen years old and being a French student for three years, she is able to quiz me on my French vocabulary and assist me with some phrases. This, to her, is the highlight of the evening. After years of my prompting her on homework assignments, the tables are turned. This new-found closeness has enhanced our relationship. A strong sense of communication exists as we are experiencing the joys and hardships of education together.

Version 2

As far as my daughter was concerned, my returning to school was a pleasant experience. In the first place, she saw her mom in a new light, as someone with a personal goal and a definite plan of attaining it. No longer did mom just talk about this elusive degree, she actually went off to school and returned home to do assignments. Secondly, this experience gave her a new outlook on the reason and importance of her own education. For example, at fifteen years old and having been a French student for three years, whereas I am only beginning, she is able to quiz me on my French vocabulary and assist me with some phrases. Thus, after years of my prompting her on homework assignments, the tables are turned. Whereas we are experiencing the joys and hardships of education together, a strong sense of communication is developing between us. This new-found closeness has enhanced our relationship.

Version 3

As far as my daughter was concerned, my returning to school was a pleasant experience. First, she saw me in a new light, as having a personal goal and a definite plan of attaining it. She was proud of this and even boasted to her friends about her student mother. Second, seeing me studying and doing my assignments has given her a new outlook on the reason and importance of her own education. She is able now, for instance, to appreciate her three years' study of French, for it enables her, at fifteen, to quiz me (who am just beginning) on my French vocabulary, and to assist me with some phrases. Thus, after years of my prompting her on homework assignments, the tables are turned. Now we experience the joys and hardships of education together. A strong sense of communication is developing between us, and this new-found closeness has enhanced our relationship.

It should be noted that when these three texts were presented in

random order to a group of 30 native speakers of English, they had no difficulty distinguishing which was which: the third was definitely "better" in some sense than the second, the second "better" than the first. This method of analysis makes it possible to identify with precision what it was that these readers were responding to.

The sector analysis of version 1 is given on page 9. As can be seen, the individual constituents of each sentence are identified, labelled, and arranged in columns; ideally there should be a separate column for each label, but space does not permit me to show this here. The labels stand for **sectors** of the sentence, or positions, some of which must and any of which may be filled by appropriate constituents. Allen identified a total of twenty-one sectors (for a description of the full sector spectrum see Allen 1972 and Deakins 1985), but only thirteen are used here. These thirteen, in the order in which they appear when filled in the same sentence are as follows:

F - filled by a **front adverbial**. This is often a subordinate clause.

Q - filled by a **question** word, or other word that requires the inversion of subject and X-word.

X₁ - filled by the **X-word** whenever the Q sector is filled. The X-word

is the first, tense-bearing, auxiliary of the verbal group.

S - filled by the **subject**.

M - filled by a **middle adverb**.

X - filled by the X-word in declarative sentences. In the present and past simple tenses the X-word—that is, the tense-bearing element—is incorporated into the lexical verb, and I have shown this by running X and V together in the analysis.

A - this sector is not identified by Allen, but it seems useful for placing any **auxiliary**, or, as in this case, **quasi-auxiliary** that comes between the X-word and the verb.

V - filled by the lexical **verb** (as opposed to auxiliaries).

O - filled by the **object** if there is one.

IO - filled by an **indirect object**.

C - filled by a **complement**, or nominal that is coreferential with the last preceding nominal. The latter, in this particular text, is always in the S sector.

D - filled by **dependent adverbials**—that is, ones that act as part of the predicate rather than as modifiers of the whole sentence.

There may be more than one in a single sentence, as there is here

in sentence 3.

E - filled by an **end adverbial**. Adverbials are considered to be in this sector when it is possible to transfer them from the E to the F sector without violating the syntax. (Such a transfer would, however, violate the rhetorical structure of the text in which the sentence were found).

Insert - this, as the name implies, labels an item that is inserted between sectors. While Inserts are, by definition, moveable (whereas sectors are normally filled in a fixed order) there are definite restrictions on where they can be placed. The one in this text is placed appropriately between the S and the X sectors in sentence 8.

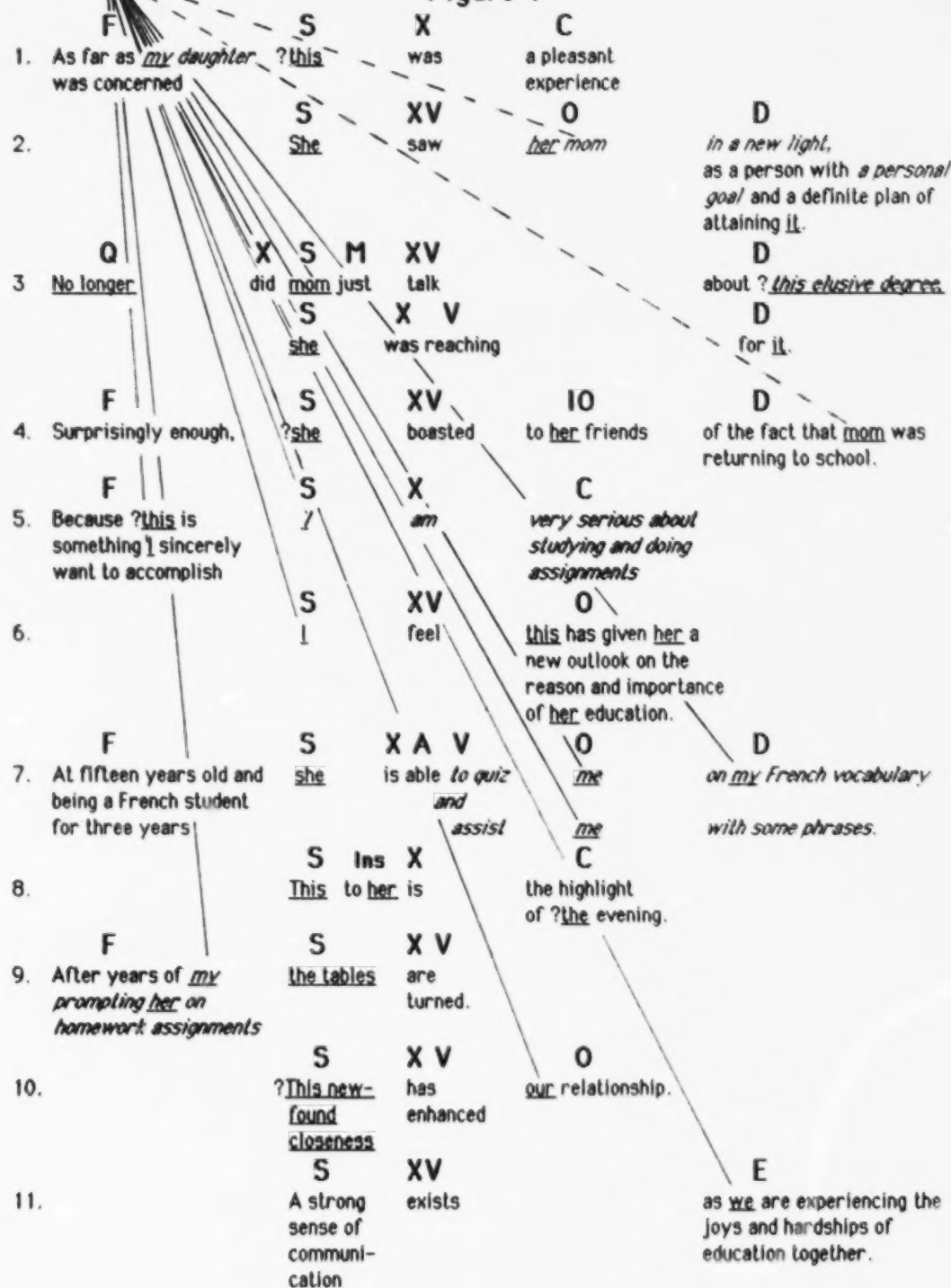
Version 1

- | | | | | | |
|-----|---|--|--|--|--|
| | F | S | X | C | |
| 1. | As far as <u>my</u> daughter was concerned | ? <u>this</u> | was | a pleasant experience | |
| 2. | | S
<u>She</u> | XV
saw | O
<u>her</u> mom | D
in a new light,
as a person with a personal goal and a definite plan of attaining it. |
| 3 | Q
<u>No longer</u> | X S M
did <u>mom</u> just | XV
talk | | D
about ? <u>this elusive degree</u> . |
| | | S
<u>she</u> | X V
was reaching | | D
for it. |
| 4. | F
Surprisingly enough, | S
? <u>she</u> | XV
boasted | IO
to <u>her</u> friends | D
of the fact that <u>mom</u> was returning to school. |
| 5. | F
Because ? <u>this</u> is something I sincerely want to accomplish | S
I | X
am | C
very serious about studying and doing assignments | |
| 6. | | S
I | XV
feel | O
<u>this</u> has given <u>her</u> a new outlook on the reason and importance of <u>her</u> education. | |
| 7. | F
At fifteen years old and being a French student for three years | S
<u>she</u> | X A V
is able to quiz and assist | O
<u>me</u> | D
on <u>my</u> French vocabulary with some phrases. |
| 8. | | S Ins X
<u>This</u> to <u>her</u> is | | C
the highlight of ? <u>the</u> evening. | |
| 9. | F
After years of <u>my</u> prompting <u>her</u> on homework assignments | S
<u>the</u> tables | X V
are turned. | | |
| 10. | | S
? <u>This new-found closeness</u> | X V
has enhanced | O
<u>our</u> relationship. | |
| 11. | | S
A strong sense of communication | XV
exists | | E
as <u>we</u> are experiencing the joys and hardships of education together. |

It is hardly necessary to do such an analysis to demonstrate that the writer of this text has a firm control over English sentence structure. There is variation in the sentence patterns used, the insert is a sign of some sophistication, and while there is one run-on (in sentence 3) it has a clear motivation and is quite inoffensive. The problems, evidently, are not at the level of the individual sentence. There are, on the other hand, some obvious difficulties with the cohesion. To show how the cohesion works I have underlined every item in the text that indicates a presupposition, and have printed the presupposed item in each case in italics. Arrows can then be drawn from each underlined item to the appropriate italicized one—in colour, preferably, using a different colour for each referent. The arrows will be found to cluster round certain points, and this identifies what I shall call **thematic elements**. Then the purely lexical cohesion can be added to the analysis by identifying any words or phrases that have sense relations with the thematic elements and by linking them to the latter by dotted arrows. It is too confusing, in black and white, to illustrate all the arrows that will appear in this text, but figure 1 shows how the analysis sheet looks when all the references to the writer are identified in this way.

The writer

Figure 1



The first of the thematic elements is the writer herself, who is referred to exophorically by the possessive my in the F sector of sentence 1. There are thirteen other references to her all told, ten of these being pronominals or pronominal possessives, and three being a single lexical item, mom. In every case the writer—or mother—is presented as given information, for the referring item is usually placed in a subordinate position and always early in the construction within which it appears, if not in the sentence as a whole. This is appropriate; where there is a text the existence of the writer is, of course, given, and does not therefore need to be emphasized.

The second thematic element is represented first as "my daughter", in the F sector of sentence 1 and subsequently referred to a total of 10 times. Here is a list of those references:

Sentence #	Sector	Reference item
2	S	she
2	O	her
4	S	she
4	IO	her
6	O	her
6	O	her
7	S	she
8	Ins	her
9	F	her
10	O	our
11	E	we

Each one of these references is pronominal, and in the initial mention the daughter is also presented as given—appropriately again, for she was introduced in an earlier part of the essay.

The two sets of references, to mother and daughter, interplay throughout the text, and this is an effective way of representing the real-life relationship between them; particularly effective is the way they come together in the last two sentences in the use of the pronominal items our and we. But there are also a couple of quite serious problems. The first is with "she" in the S sector of sentence 4. The last she, in the S sector of the previous sentence, refers to "mom", the third person being used to represent the daughter's point of view. Thus, when reading sentence 4, "Surprisingly enough, she ...", one thinks, at first, that "she" still refers to the mother and that the sentence will give more information about her efforts to get an education. But when one reaches the predicate one has to stop and rethink: it was not "mom" who boasted to her friends. The second problem is with the use of I in the F and the S sector of the next sentence, "Because this is something I sincerely want to accomplish, I ...". This brings a change in the grammatical subject, back from daughter to mother, and that suggests a change in the rhetorical

subject too; the impression is enhanced by the fact that the first person instead of the third person is used, implying that the writer is no longer presenting her daughter's point of view. The reader is thus set up to expect a new topic, but sentence 6, "I feel this has given her a new outlook ...", belies that impression, and so, again, one has to readjust. Such demands for readjustment play a large part in making this passage difficult to read and thus rendering it unsatisfactory as text.

The third thematic element is again treated as given, being represented by "this" in the S sector of sentence 1. But here, again, there is a serious problem. "This" refers anaphorically to previously mentioned text; the referent does not appear, however, in the preceding paragraph but way back on the previous page. By this stage, therefore, it is difficult to tell what "this" is, until one reaches "the fact that mom was returning to school" in the D sector of sentence 4. This uncertainty of reference is particularly unfortunate because the theme of the writer's returning to school is central to the whole paragraph, as is suggested by subsequent words and phrases that are associated with it—"education" in sentences 6 and 11, "this elusive degree" in sentence 3, "I am very serious about studying and doing assignments" in sentence 5, "student" in sentence 7 and

"homework assignments" in sentence 9. But apart from the rather obscure demonstrative in "this elusive degree" in sentence 3, there is no grammatical indication of this association; the writer depends instead on her readers using their real world knowledge to make the appropriate connections.

The fourth thematic element in this passage is presented as rheme, and therefore new information, in sentence 1: "As far as my daughter was concerned this was a pleasant experience". It is an unexceptionable topic sentence, but the theme is not then explicitly picked up in any of the subsequent text. There are only lexical references to feelings and activities that presumably give or express pleasure: "she saw her mom in a new light", "she boasted to her friends", "this has given her a new outlook", "this, to her, is the highlight of the evening", and "a strong sense of communication exists". Again, the writer depends heavily on the real world knowledge of her readers, and on the assumption that they will have the same idea of pleasure as she has.

The other four demonstratives in this passage do not represent thematic elements, for they do not cluster round particular points. Two of them appear early in the sentence, and each refers to an idea which is

presented as rheme in the preceding sentence: this in "I feel this has given her a new outlook" in sentence 6 refers to "I am very serious about studying and doing assignments", and the same word in "This, to her, is the highlight of the evening" in sentence 7 picks up "to quiz me on my French vocabulary and assist me with some phrases". Neither presents a problem, but the two remaining this's both do: In the F sector of sentence 5 we are told "This is something I sincerely want to accomplish", but there is no phrase earlier in the text that tells us what this is; similarly, in sentence 10, there is nothing in the preceding text to explain "This new-found closeness".

When the paragraph was discussed in class as an editing exercise the writer's classmates were quick to point out the cohesion problems, and they saw also the difficulty of the apparent change of topic in sentence 5. The writer took careful notes and then produced version 2 in the next draft of her essay. The analysis of the revised version is on page 17.

Version 2

- | | | | | | |
|----|--|---|----------------------|--|---|
| 1. | F | S | X | C | |
| | As far as <u>my daughter</u> was concerned, | <u>my</u> returning to school | was | | a pleasant experience. |
| | L | S | XV | O | D |
| 2. | <u>In the first place</u> | <u>she</u> | saw | <u>her mom</u> | <i>In a new light,</i>
as someone with a personal goal
and a definite plan of attaining it. |
| | Q | X | S | M | V |
| 3. | <u>No longer</u> | did | <u>mom</u> | just | talk |
| | | | <u>she</u> | actually | <u>XV</u> P |
| | | | | and returned | off |
| | | | | | about <u>this elusive degree</u> . |
| | L | S | XV | IO | O |
| 4. | <u>Secondly</u> | <u>this experience</u> | gave | <u>her</u> | <i>a new outlook on the reason and
importance of <u>her own education</u>.</i> |
| | | Insert | | | |
| | | whereas I am <u>only beginning</u> , | | | |
| | L | F / | S | X A V O | D |
| 5. | <u>For example</u> , | at fifteen years old | <u>she</u> | <i>is able</i>
<i>to quiz <u>me</u></i> | <i>on <u>my</u> French vocabulary</i> |
| | | and having been a French student for three years, | | <i>and to assist <u>me</u></i> | <i>with some phrases</i> |
| | L | F | S | X V | |
| 6. | <u>Thus</u> , | after years of <u>my</u> | <u>the tables</u> | are turned. | |
| | | <u>prompting her on homework assignments</u> | | | |
| | F | S | X V | D | |
| 7. | Whereas <u>we</u> are experiencing the joys and hardships of education together, | <i>a strong sense of communication</i> | <i>is developing</i> | <i>between us.</i> | |
| | | S | X V | O | |
| 8. | | <u>This new-found closeness</u> | has enhanced | <u>our relationship</u> . | |

An obvious point to be noted here is that the text has become shorter—eight sentences instead of eleven. The writer has accomplished this reduction by doing three things. First, she has removed the information in sentence 4 of the original—"Surprisingly enough she boasted to her friends of the fact that mom was returning to school"—and in so doing she has eliminated one of her cohesion problems. She has also cut the information in sentence 8, thus removing another slightly obscure reference, "the evening". Finally she has packed the information that was in sentence 5, "I am very serious about studying and doing assignments", into the second predicate of the second half of the new version's sentence 3: "she actually went off to school and returned home to do assignments". This again eliminates a problem, because the change to I in the S sector is now not necessary.

But her revision has not been a purely reductive process: there is one instance where the presentation of information is reversed, and there are a couple of important additions. The reversed information is in sentences 7 and 8, whereas it was in sentences 11 and 10 in the original. It now reads "Whereas we are experiencing the joys and hardships of education together, a strong sense of communication is developing between us. This

new-found closeness has enhanced our relationship". Again, the effect is to eliminate a cohesion problem, for the predicate of sentence 7 now provides a referent for "this new-found closeness" in the S sector of sentence 8. As for the additions, there is, first, some more information packed into the insert, "whereas I am only beginning", in sentence 5—information that is rhetorically significant because it explains the rest of that sentence. Second, and still more important, is the introduction of a new sector. (There are, in fact, two new sectors, but one of these, P, for adverbial particles, has no marked effect on the rhetorical structure). This new sector is L, for **linkers**, or connectives, and its use has a radical effect on the cohesion of the text.

This is not to say, however, that the text has completely changed. There is the same interplay here as in the earlier version of the two personal referents, mother and daughter. Each is referred to about as many times as before—the mother twelve times and the daughter ten—and they both come together, as in the original text, in we, us, and our in the last two sentences.

With regard to the third thematic element, however, there are some significant changes. First, it is explicitly named, as "my returning to

school" in the S sector of sentence 1, so the uncertainty in the first version is now removed, and also there is a clear referent provided for "this elusive degree" in sentence 3. Second, the subsequent references to the mother's returning to school are more clearly marked, by the repetition of the word school in sentence 3 and by the two uses of the word education in sentences 4 and 7. But the most effective change in this respect is the addition of own in "her own education" in sentence 4; for own gives the reader a clear signal to contrast the daughter's education with that of the mother, a contrast which is then picked up and marked again by the insert, in the story about French in sentence 5.

The fourth thematic element, "a pleasant experience" is also more effectively handled. It retains its position as rheme in sentence 1 but is then thematized by the linkers in sentences 2 and 4, "In the first place" and "secondly". This probably does more than any other of the revisions to give the reader a sense of what the point of the paragraph is.

Finally, the L sector is also effectively used in the second half of the paragraph to show how sentence 5 is related to sentence 4, "For example", and sentence 6 to sentence 5, "Thus", so that these sentences now follow the normative pattern of picking up given information at the beginning and

presenting new information at the end. And the same can be said of sentences 7 and 8, where, as a result of the reordering of the two sentences, "this new-found closeness" picks up "a strong sense of communication is developing between us".

So this second version of the paragraph is, at least as far as the cohesion is concerned, a great improvement on the first; but there are still some problems. The third person reference to "mom" means that there is still some slight ambiguity in the use of "her" in the IO sector of sentence 4—although the ambiguity is much reduced by use of "secondly" in the L sector; there is a lack of parallelism between "in the first place" in sentence 1 and "secondly" in sentence 4; sentence 5, with its long front adverbial followed by an insert, is quite hard to read; and a grammatical error has actually been introduced in sentence 7. So I decided to revise the paragraph myself to see what would happen. I did the revisions without conscious reference to the principles discussed here, but rather from what "sounded right", as I do when working on my own texts.

My version, as seen in the framework of sector analysis, is given on page 22.

Version 3

- | | | | | |
|--------|--|---|--|---|
| | F | S | X | C |
| 1. | As far as <u>my</u> daughter was concerned, | <u>my</u> returning to school | was | a pleasant experience. |
| | L | S | XV | O |
| 2. | <u>First</u> , | <u>she</u> | saw <u>me</u> | In a new light, as having a personal goal and a definite plan of attaining it; |
| | | S | X | C |
| 3. | | <u>She</u> | was | proud of <u>this</u> |
| | | M | XV | D |
| | | and even | boasted | to <u>her</u> friends about <u>her</u> student mother. |
| | L | S | X V IO | O |
| 4. | <u>Second</u> , | seeing <u>me</u> studying and doing <u>my</u> assignments | has given <u>her</u> | a new outlook on the reason and importance of <u>her own</u> education. |
| | | S | X A Ins Ins V | O |
| 5. | | <u>She</u> | <u>new, for instance</u> is able to appreciate | <u>her</u> three years' study of French, |
| E: I | | S | XV | O |
| | | | | Insert Insert |
| SE for | | <u>it</u> | enables | at fifteen, (who am just beginning, <u>her</u> , / to quiz <u>me</u> / on <u>my</u> French vocabulary, and to assist <u>me</u> with some phrases. |
| | L | F | S | X V |
| 6. | <u>Thus</u> , after years of <u>my</u> prompting <u>her</u> on homework assignments, | <u>the tables</u> | are turned. | |
| | F | S | XV | O |
| 7. | <u>Now</u> | <u>we</u> | experience | the joys and hardships of education |
| | | S | X V | D |
| 8a | | A strong sense of communication | is developing | between <u>us</u> . |
| | | S | X V | O |
| 8b and | | this new-found closeness | has enhanced | <u>our</u> relationship. |

There is the same number of sentences here as in version 2, but the information is not distributed in quite the same way. In sentence 3, for instance, a new general proposition is inserted—"she was proud of this"—and information that got lost in version 2 is now restored with "and even boasted to her friends about her student mother". Then much, though not all, of the information that was in the second half of version 2's sentence 3, "She actually went off to school and returned home to do assignments", is now transferred to the S sector of version 3's sentence 4, as "Seeing me studying and doing my assignments". The predicate of sentence 4 remains the same, "has given her a new outlook on the meaning and importance of her own education", but there are some more changes in sentence 5: another new, and again general, proposition has been added ("She is able ... to appreciate her three years' study of French") and the information that was in the main clause of sentence 5 is now subordinated and placed in the E sector, "for it enables her ... to quiz me ... on my French vocabulary, and to assist me with some phrases". Finally, version 2's sentence 7, "Whereas we are experiencing the joys and hardships of education together, a strong sense of communication is developing between us", has been split so that the front adverbial is now a sentence

on its own, "Now we experience the joys and hardships of education together", and the main clause becomes the first half of a coordinate sentence 8, "A strong sense of communication is developing between us, and this new-found closeness has enhanced our relationship".

What effect does all this have on the cohesion? As far as the mother and daughter are concerned little has changed, except that the former is now almost always referred to in the first person; this requires, perhaps unfortunately, the loss of the word "mom", but on the other hand it eliminates the potential ambiguity of "her" in sentence 4, and the daughter's point of view is still represented by the new phrase "her student mother". Apart from this change the references to these two thematic elements are identical to those in the student's version.

The third thematic element "my returning to school" is also introduced in exactly the same way as in version 2; and the grammatically marked reference in "her own education" in sentence 4 is retained. "This elusive degree", on the other hand, is now lost; but it is replaced by "her student mother" which picks up the idea more effectively, for it provides a double reference through the relationships of "mother" to "my" and "student" to "returning to school", thus making the cohesion stronger. Also

the information in sentence 5, about French, is now more clearly related to the theme of "my returning to school", first because the daughter's ability to assist the writer is now subordinated, as a causal adverbial, to "She is able ... to appreciate her three years' study ...", and second, because that, in turn, is linked through the insert "for instance" to "a new outlook on the reason and importance of her own education".

As for "a pleasant experience", the changes at the sentence level again make for tighter cohesion. The two linkers that the writer introduced in sentences 2 and 4 of her revised version have been retained, although tidied up so that they are now parallel; and thus the writer's basic structure of two explanations for the pleasantness of the experience remains the same. But the two general propositions that have been added, by using the words "proud" and "appreciate" provide more obvious lexical links with "pleasant", and so the further information that is subordinated to these propositions—"she boasted to her friends", and "it enables her ... to quiz me on my French vocabulary ..."—is also linked, though less directly, to this idea.

This description of the various changes made from the original text is not exhaustive, but enough has been said to establish what this writer's

main difficulties are, and therefore to suggest what issues she, and others like her, might usefully address. For obviously one would not want to teach students this whole system of analysis: the purpose of an exercise like this is to identify the grammatical principles that govern English discourse so that we can help our students to apply them to their own writing.

First there are the obvious problems with grammatical cohesion. This student has a complete command of the requisite pronominal and demonstrative forms, but she still needs to become conscious of her use of them so that she can check that their referents are present and that there is no ambiguity. Such consciousness should not be difficult to achieve, for both pronouns and demonstratives are listable items, and the lists are not too long to be simply learnt. Our function as teachers is merely to present these lists and alert students to the dangers of ambiguous reference.

Second, another aspect of cohesion that merits attention is the use of linkers. This student does not include any in version 1, and in version 2 her use of them is a little clumsy—though her "In the first place" and "secondly" are certainly effective in signalling the basic structure of the paragraph. The list of words that can fill the L sector, their logical

functions, the parallelism that obtains within groups of them, and the possibility of shifting some of them to a later point in the sentence (as in "she is able now, for instance ...") are all points that could be usefully discussed. The danger is, of course, that students may start to use linkers too much; one way of guarding against this would be to encourage them to experiment with inserting linkers in texts where they are absent, or taking them out in texts where they are present, to see what the effect is—and if the linker adds nothing in the way of clarity it should be left out.

These points about grammatical reference and linkers are fairly obvious, and many teachers already give explicit instruction on them; but another point, which is less often addressed, is the rhetorical use of sentence structure. Consider, for example, this writer's difficulty with the S sector—not that she ever fails to fill it (each sentence is individually correct) but she seems not to be fully aware of its rhetorical function. Perhaps the single most distracting feature in version 1 is the way the filler of this sector changes between sentences 2 and 5: "... she [the daughter] saw her mom in a new light ..."; "... she [the mother] was reaching for it"; "... she [the daughter] boasted to her friends ..."; "... I [the mother] am very serious ...". Nor is the writer altogether successful in

addressing the problems, as she tried to do after the class had discussed this paragraph: her response in version 2 is simply to drop the information about the daughter's boasting—a somewhat regrettable loss of content—and she retains the change of subject between sentence 2 ("... she saw her mom ...") and sentence 3 ("No longer did mom just talk ..."). A helpful approach to grammar, for this student, might be to practise rewriting sentences in different patterns so that she can get greater control over which item goes where; and, as part of this, one might discuss the use of general propositions, such as version 3's "She was proud of this ..." (in sentence 3) and "She is able, now, for instance, to appreciate her three years' study of French ..." (in sentence 5) both to link a sentence to its predecessor (note the use in the first example of the demonstrative this, and, in the second, of the linker, for instance) and to move the new, specific, information, to the end, or rheme, position. This should all be done with reference to a continuous text so that the rhetorical effects of such rewriting can be perceived; ideally the text should be one written by a member of the class so that the rewriting can be directly related to the writer's own perception of what is important and should therefore be made prominent.

Finally, it is noticeable that in her attempt to resolve the cohesion

problems of version 1 this writer has tended, in version 2, to put too much information in the F sector. There is a sequence of three long front adverbials, two of which are followed by another long constituent, which all makes for difficult reading:

Sentence 5: ... at fifteen years old and having been a French student for three years, whereas I am only beginning, she is able to quiz me ...

Sentence 6: ... after years of my prompting her on homework assignments, the tables are turned.

Sentence 7: Whereas we are experiencing the joys and hardships of education together, a strong sense of communication is developing between us.

In addition, all the information in these front adverbials is new, and in the cases of sentences 5 and 7 it is also important because it explains the subsequent discourse. The problem is addressed in sentence 5 of version 3, by placing the point about the daughter's having studied French in the object sector: "She is able ... to appreciate her three years' study of French"; and, similarly, in sentence 7, by rendering "... we are experiencing the joys of education together" as a sentence on its own. There is a straightforward principle in operation here: the F sector is appropriately used for establishing cohesion with previous text (consider "as far as my

daughter was concerned" in sentence 1 of all three versions) and for giving background information that is not central to the argument, (as in "after years of my prompting her ...", which again appears in all three versions); but it is not an appropriate place for important new information. Students need to be informed of this principle, given practice in applying it to particular texts, and encouraged to use it as a guide when revising their own writing.

To sum up, the need to work with grammar does not end when students are no longer making sentence-level errors. Just as it is important for them to think about what their readers already know and what new information they want to give them, so also it is important for them to recognize, as instruments for communicating with those readers, the resources that English has for distinguishing given from new information. These resources are largely grammatical: reference items, explicit linkers, and perhaps most important, the distribution of information within the sentence.

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